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29 December 1964

SUBJECT: League of Estonian Liberation (LEL), Background Data
on

1. Attached herewith are a variety of documents on the LEL which provide a synopsis of its history, its composition, and aims. A copy of the LEL certificate of incorporation is attached. A roster of leaders and a schematic diagram of the LEL executive council is also provided. Finally, a number of letters to prominent US governmental bodies, typical of other similar letters prepared by the LEL, is attached.
2. To the best of our knowledge, on the basis of statements made by a variety of prominent and reliable Estonian emigres--not the least of whom is the past president of the LEL (Edward REISSAR of Washington DC), the LEL is an altogether patriotic pro-American organization which is strongly motivated by anti-Communist ideals and principles. Its activities have drawn nothing but favorable attention. In the summer of 1962 the US Special Forces turned to the LEL, and to the Estonian emigre members of this organization, to participate in the US Special Forces maneuvers; a total of some 150 Estonians participated in these activities.
3. There are twelve, or more, LEL chapters which are subordinate to the LEL national organization. There are approximately 700 members of this para-military type organization. Edward REISSAR, presently an employee of the Library of Congress, was the first president, and organizer, of the Estonian veterans into the League of Estonian Liberation. The mouthpiece for the LEL is the newspaper, Voitloja, which is printed in Germany on a monthly basis (if funds are available).
4. The New York group is a chapter of the LEL national organization. As the attachments will indicate, there are a variety of such chapters throughout the USA. To a great extent, the New York group has been dominated by two individuals, Eimar KEERD and August KARSNA, both of whom at various times have held positions within the NY LEL chapter. Both KEERD and KARSNA--see separate report for additional biographic data on them--have been rebels and have, to our knowledge, been disruptive forces not only within the LEL but within the entire Estonian community and within the larger Estonian National Council of the USA. However, in the interests of unity, all concerned have heretofore tried to placate KEERD and KARSNA in order to keep them from becoming too disruptive; this has gone as far as having both, or either, hold positions of lesser responsibility within the various Estonian groups, including the ENC and the LEL as well as other organizations, in order thereby to have them inside the organizations where they could be less disruptive than outside the organizations where they could create more problems or attempt organizing opposing forces.

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5. To our knowledge, within the USA KEERD has been a strong supporter and adherent of E. HEINE. After HEINE succeeded in preparing his movie in Canada, he could find no one in the USA who would sponsor him. As a result, KEERD, without authorization of the LEL but speaking in the name of the LEL, took it upon himself to invite HEINE in the USA in an April 1963. For this reason, the larger part of the Estonian emigre community in the USA has labored, and probably still continues to do so to this date, under the impression that HEINE came to the USA on the official invitation of the LEL and its president, J. RAUS. While KEERD's disagreement with the entire LEL body had been smoldering for many years prior thereto, he used the occasion of RAUS' objection to the misuse of the LEL name, in inviting HEINE to the USA, to force the issue. Sometime in late 1963, KEERD and his small group of supporters took the NY chapter of the LEL out of the LEL national organization. At the time of HEINE's presence in the USA, while HEINE was travelling about the USA, KEERD made free use of the LEL name in paving the way for HEINE throughout the USA. Naturally, the LEL and RAUS took strong objection to this. In conclusion, while the HEINE affair fanned the sparks into a flame, KEERD's dispute with the LEL (and with the entire Estonian emigre community) is of long standing and is of such a nature that most Estonian emigres consider KEERD (if not also KARSNA) to be a nut, a disruptionist, a liar, a clown, and even a Soviet agent because of his suspicious background and because of his disruptive tendencies.

For attachment to this report, entitled
"The Begining of Estonian Liberation"
see Turi Raus file

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